

page 19, in the bill itself there is no percentage wage. It is described as XX, and that will probably be something that we'll talk about later with the bill because there is no average weekly wage in the green copy of the bill. The fourth section would eliminate the requirement of lump-sum settlements must be approved by the district court. This is in a section that has always been a problem too, since I have been in the Nebraska Legislature. This section provides for the purposes of workers' compensation, the term defines the term "intoxification," "intoxication." Sixth section provides for authorizing the Workers' Compensation Court to maintain a toll-free telephone number for workers to call in for injury. That is on page 33 of the bill. The seventh section would authorize the compensation court to establish the standards for certification of vocational rehabilitation counselors. That is in sections 35 through 37, pages. Eighth section provides for the funding of Workers' Compensation Court through a 1 percent premium tax placed upon insurance companies, and the equivalent of 1 percent of the premium rate against risk management pools and self-insurers, pages 42 through 45. Ninth section would authorized the compensation court to establish procedures for informal dispute resolution by staff or outside mediators, page 46. Tenth section provides for the Workers' Compensation Court to access the Department of Labor unemployment insurance information to track down employers who are not obtaining workers' compensation coverage for their employees, page 50 of the bill. The eleventh section would require employers to establish safety committees in working through the Commissioner of Labor, page 50 through 51 of the bill. And the final section creates the Workplace Safety Consultation Program under which the Department of Labor will conduct workplace inspections, and that's in page 52 through the end of the bill. Now the committee amendment provides that a study shall be conducted in 1997 to see how these different changes are impacted on the Workers' Compensation Court, and so that's the purpose of the committee amendments.

PRESIDENT MOUL: Thank you, Senator Abboud. Now Senator Coordsen.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Madam President and members of the body. We've come today to what is, for the business and labor part of our economy, a most important day. I am not going to talk in this opening about the committee amendments because the committee amendments certainly are acceptable to me, but rather why and how we got to this situation. Workers' compensation